

District of Columbia

STATE DATA CENTER

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BRIEF

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District Population Trends 1800 to 2009

Introduction

In 1800, the federal government moved to the new capital named “City of Washington”, later called District of Columbia, and Congress held its first session in its new location on November 17, 1800. The total population within the current

boundary of the District of Columbia in 1800 was 8,144. One hundred years later, in 1900, the population of the District of Columbia climbed to 278,718. This report focuses on the population trend of the District of Columbia from 1800 to 2009, using data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau’s decennial censuses from 1800 through 2000, and the 2009 population estimates.

Table 1. District Population by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1800 to 2009

Year	Total Population	Race						Hispanic (any race)	White, Non-Hispanic Origin
		White	Black	American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian and Pacific Islander	Other Race			
2009	599,657	243,617	323,931	2,352	19,437	10,320	53,025	201,158	
2000	572,059	197,168	349,390	1,961	15,762	7,778	44,953	161,260	
1990	606,900	179,667	399,604	1,466	11,214	14,949	32,710	166,131	
1980	638,333	171,768	448,906	1,031	6,636	9,992	17,679	164,244	
1970	756,510	209,272	537,712	956	5,372	3,198	15,671	200,656	
1960	763,956	345,263	411,737	587	4,690	1,679	(NA)	(NA)	
1950	802,178	517,865	280,803	330	2,890	290	(NA)	(NA)	
1940	663,091	474,326	187,266	190	1,309	(X)	720	473,606	
1930	486,869	353,981	132,068	40	780	(X)	(NA)	(NA)	
1920	437,571	326,860	109,966	37	708	(X)	(NA)	(NA)	
1910	331,069	236,128	94,446	68	427	(X)	(NA)	(NA)	
1900	278,718	191,532	86,702	22	462	(X)	(NA)	(NA)	
1890	230,392	154,695	75,572	25	100	(X)	(NA)	(NA)	
1880	177,624	118,006	59,596	5	17		Black		
1870	131,700	88,278	43,404	15	3	Total	Free	Slave	
1860	75,080	60,763	14,316	1	-	14,316	11,131	3,185	
1850	51,687	37,941	13,746	(NA)	(NA)	13,746	10,059	3,687	
1840	33,745	23,926	9,819	(NA)	(NA)	9,819	6,499	3,320	
1830	30,261	21,152	9,109	(NA)	(NA)	9,109	4,604	4,505	
1820	23,336	16,058	7,278	(NA)	(NA)	7,278	2,758	4,520	
1810	15,471	10,345	5,126	(NA)	(NA)	5,126	1,572	3,554	
1800	8,144	5,672	2,472	(NA)	(NA)	2,472	400	2,072	

(-) Represents zero or rounds to 0.0. (X) Not applicable. (NA) Not available.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Population Trends

The District's population experienced several changes during this 210 year period from 1800 through 2009. For the first 100 years, from 1800 to 1900, the District's population grew over 3,000 percent from 8,144 to 278,718 (Table 1). For the next 50 years, from 1900 to 1950, this growth continued with the District's population peaking in 1950 at 802,178. However, for the next 50 years, the population decreased by some 230,000 and was recorded at 572,059 in 2000. Since the 2000 census, the population of the District has increased to 599,657 people in 2009, according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates (Figure 1).

The upswing and downswing of the District's population over these 210 years have been influenced by many factors. These include the abolition of slavery (1865), the expansion of the Federal government during and after World Wars I & II, and the Civil Rights movement (peak 1955-1968). From 1800 through 1950, the District attracted population at a tremendous rate, with double digit percentage increases each decade ranging from 11 percent to 90 percent. The largest numerical population increase of any decade in the District's history was the addition of 176,222 people in the 1930s (Table 2). This was followed by the second largest increase in the 1940s, with another 139,087 people. By 1950, the District was home to its highest population ever with 802,178 residents.

The District's population history has not always been one of positive growth. Each decennial census after 1950 through census 2000, showed the District population declining continuously. The largest decline of the District's population took place in the 1970s when the population lost amounted to 118,177 or 15.6 percent (Table 2). This decline continued through Census 2000 as the District lost five percent of its population in the 1980s and another six percent in the 1990s.

Year	Total Population	Population Change	
		Numeric Change	% Change
2009	599,657	27,598	4.8
2000	572,059	-34,841	-5.7
1990	606,900	-31,433	-4.9
1980	638,333	-118,177	-15.6
1970	756,510	-7,446	-1.0
1960	763,956	-38,222	-4.8
1950	802,178	139,087	21.0
1940	663,091	176,222	36.2
1930	486,869	49,298	11.3
1920	437,571	106,502	32.2
1910	331,069	52,351	18.8
1900	278,718	48,326	21.0
1890	230,392	52,768	29.7
1880	177,624	45,924	34.9
1870	131,700	56,620	75.4
1860	75,080	23,393	45.3
1850	51,687	17,942	53.2
1840	33,745	3,484	11.5
1830	30,261	6,925	29.7
1820	23,336	7,865	50.8
1810	15,471	7,327	90.0
1800	8,144	-	-

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1900 to 2000 and 2009 Estimates.

Figure 1. District Population 1800-2009

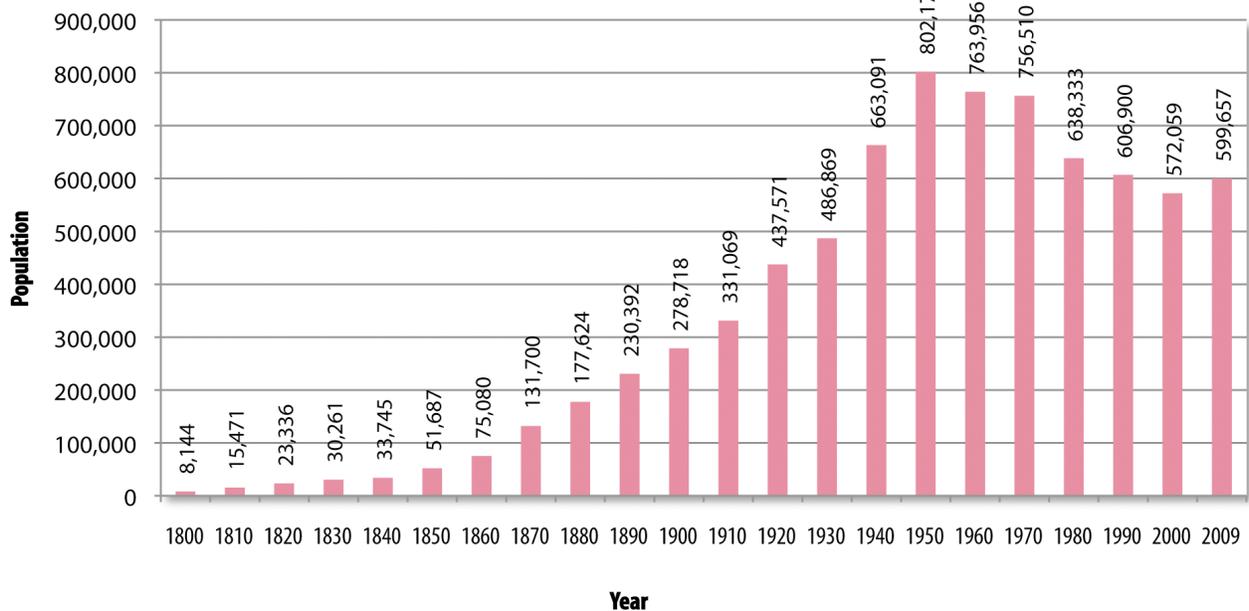


Table 3. Percent Distribution of District Population by Race and Ethnicity: 1800-2009

Year	Total Population	Race			Ethnicity
		Percent White	Percent Black	Percent Other Races	Percent Hispanic
2009	599,657	40.6	54.0	5.4	8.8
2000	572,059	34.5	61.0	4.5	7.9
1990	606,900	29.6	65.8	4.6	5.4
1980	638,333	26.9	70.3	2.8	2.8
1970	756,510	27.7	71.1	1.2	(NA)
1960	763,956	45.2	53.9	0.9	(NA)
1950	802,178	64.6	35.0	0.4	(NA)
1940	663,091	71.5	28.2	0.2	(NA)
1930	486,869	72.7	27.1	0.2	(NA)
1920	437,571	74.7	25.1	0.2	(NA)
1910	331,069	71.3	28.5	0.1	(NA)
1900	278,718	68.7	31.1	0.2	(NA)
1890	230,392	67.1	32.8	0.1	(NA)
1880	177,624	66.4	33.6	-	(NA)
1870	131,700	67.0	33.0	-	(NA)
1860	75,080	80.9	19.1	-	(NA)
1850	51,687	73.4	26.6	-	(NA)
1840	33,745	70.9	29.1	-	(NA)
1830	30,261	69.9	30.1	-	(NA)
1820	23,336	68.8	31.2	-	(NA)
1810	15,471	66.9	33.1	-	(NA)
1800	8,144	69.6	30.4	-	(NA)

(-) Represents zero or rounds to 0.0. (NA) Not available.

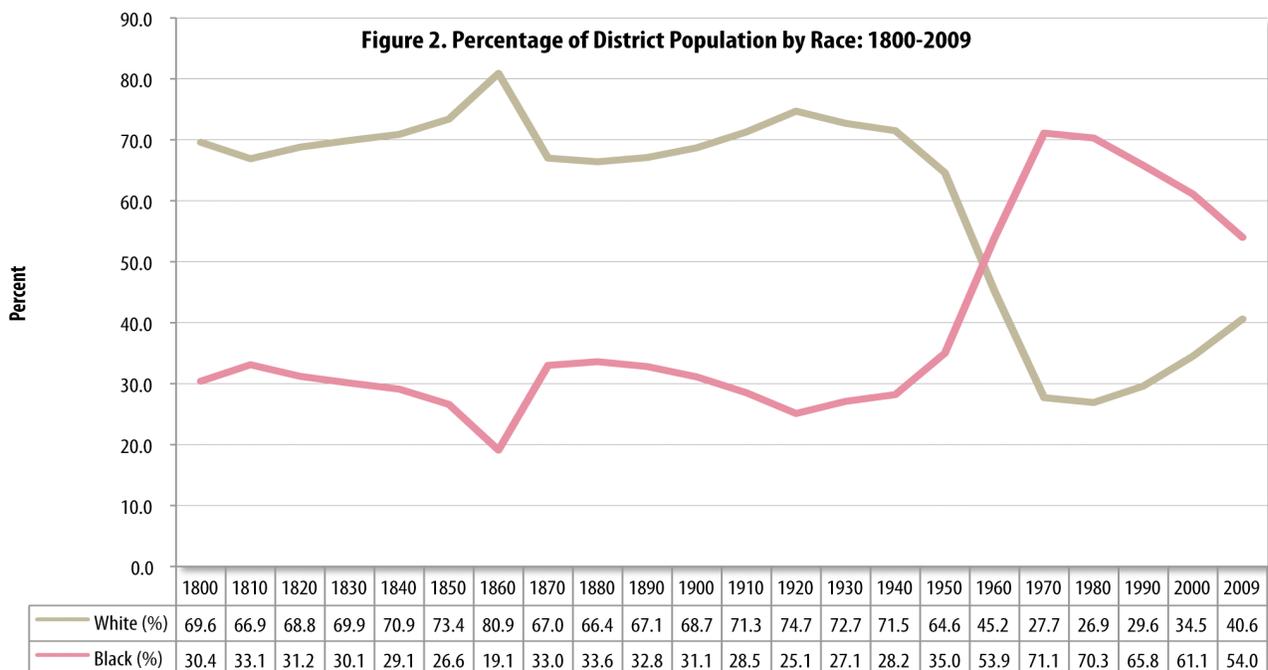
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Since census 2000, the District's population has begun showing increases after 50 years of decline. In 2009, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the District's population at 599,657 residents, continuing a trend of population growth since 2000 when the population count was at 572,059. Between 2000 and 2009, the District gained 27,598 residents at a growth rate of 4.8 percent.

Racial and Ethnic Composition

Between 1800 and 2009, the racial composition of the District changed considerably (Figure 2). In 1800, 69.6 percent of District residents were White and 30.4 percent were Black (Table 3). Of the total District population, the highest percentage of White residents was recorded at 80.9 percent in the 1860 census, while the highest number of White residents was recorded at 517,865 in the 1950 census (Tables 1 & 3). After peaking in the 1950 census, however, the White population left the District in droves, resulting in lost of 346,000 white residents between 1950 and 1980. The White population in the District stood at 171,768 in the 1980 census. By 2009, even though the city has not regained the high numbers of White residents as in past decades, a resurgence of Whites has now pushed their numbers back up to 243,617, according to Census Bureau estimates.

For Black residents in the District, both the highest number and percentage of people were recorded in the 1970 census when the Black population peaked at 537,712, accounting for 71.1 percent of the District's population (Tables 1 & 3). After the 1970 census, however, the Black population in the District showed continuous decline. Almost four decades later, the 2009 population estimates show Black residents of the District numbering 323,931. Migration data from 2000 through 2008 show most out-migration of District residents were to Maryland and Virginia.



People of other races represented less than one percent of the District's total population between 1800 and 1960. In the 1970 census, 1.2 percent of the population of the District was of other races that included American Indian and Alaska Native, and Asian and Pacific Islander. In 2009, other races were 5.3 percent of the population with Asians being the majority at 19,437 or 3.2 percent of the total District population (Asians were grouped with Pacific Islanders prior to the 2000 census).

In terms of ethnicity, the Census Bureau began providing data on Hispanics from the 1970. In 1970, Hispanics in the District were estimated at 15,671 or 2.1 percent of the District's population. By 2009, Hispanics were estimated at 53,025 or 8.8 percent of the District's population.

Today, the District remains a majority Black or African American city as in the 1960s. However, the number and proportion of Blacks or African Americans is declining, while the number and proportion of whites and other races are increasing. Hispanics, as an ethnic group, are also increasing.

Age and Sex Composition

The age composition of the District's population changed during the 1900 to 2009 period. In the 1900 census, the District had 69,615 residents under age 15, comprising 25 percent of the total population. The number and percent of children under age 15 peaked at 193,672 or 25.4 percent in the 1960 census. Since 1960, the number of children under age 15 in the District has declined. In 2009, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the number of children under age 15 at 94,970, comprising 15.8 percent of the District's total population.

Turning to the elderly, the number and percent of population age 65 years and over showed a different trend. In 1900, there were 12,029 people age 65 years and over, comprising 4.3 percent of the District's population. In 1990, the number and percent of population age 65 years and over peaked at 77,847 or 12.8 percent of the District's population. In 2000, both the number and percent of population age 65 years and over declined to 69,898 and 12.2 percent, respectively. In 2009, the population age 65 years and over increased to 70,184, while the percentage declined slightly to 11.7 percent (Table 4).

Changes in the District's population structure over the last 100 years are illustrated by the population pyramids in figures 3 and 4, where each bar represents the percentage of the total population in each age-sex group. In 1900, the base of the pyramid exhibits a rectangular shape, averaging about five percent for each age-sex group up to age 19 years (Figure 3). The age group 20 to 24 comprised the largest proportion of the population, averaging five percent for males and six percent for females. Beyond age 24 the population exhibits steadily declining proportions, with the 75 and over age groups totaling just 1.28 percent of the population.

By census 2000, the population structure had changed somewhat (Figure 4). Each age-sex group from 0 to 19 years was now less than four percent of the population as declining fertility rates led to smaller proportions in the youngest age groups. The largest share of the population was still in their twenties and early thirties. Another important feature of the 2000 age-sex pyramid is the less "cone-like" shape at the top of the pyramid compared to the 1900 pyramid. The 65 and over age group now comprised 12 percent of the population as compared to only four percent in 1900. This larger proportion in the older age groups in part results from relatively larger declines in

Since 1960, the number and percentage of children under age 15 have declined.

Table 4. Population of the District by Age Group: 1900 to 2009

Year	Total Population	Age Group			Percent Age Group		
		Under 15 years	15 to 64 years	65 years and over	Under 15 years	15 to 64 years	65 years and over
2009	599,657	94,970	434,503	70,184	15.8	72.5	11.7
2000	572,059	97,939	404,222	69,898	17.1	70.7	12.2
1990	606,900	98,666	430,387	77,847	16.3	70.9	12.8
1980	638,333	113,116	450,930	74,287	17.7	70.6	11.6
1970	756,510	188,381	497,326	70,803	24.9	65.7	9.4
1960	763,956	193,672	501,141	69,143	25.4	65.6	9.1
1950	802,178	160,861	584,630	56,687	20.1	72.9	7.1
1940	663,091	118,185	503,700	41,206	17.8	76.0	6.2
1930	486,869	100,640	357,194	29,035	20.7	73.4	6.0
1920	437,571	90,092	312,440	35,039	20.6	71.4	8.0
1910	331,069	76,630	236,187	18,252	23.1	71.3	5.5
1900	278,718	69,615	197,074	12,029	25.0	70.7	4.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1900 to 2000 and 2008 American Community Survey.

mortality at older ages as life expectancy rates increased in the latter part of the century.

The median age of the District population continued to increase. In 1990, the District had a median age of 33.4 years. Census 2000 showed a median age of 34.6 years for the District population. In 2009, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the median age of the District population at 35.1 years.

The sex ratio in the District has remained fairly constant. In 1900, 146,714 or 52.6 percent of the District's population were females and 132,004 or 47.4 percent were males. In 2009, there were 316,594 or 52.8 percent females and 283,063 or 47.2 percent males.

Figure 3. DC 1900

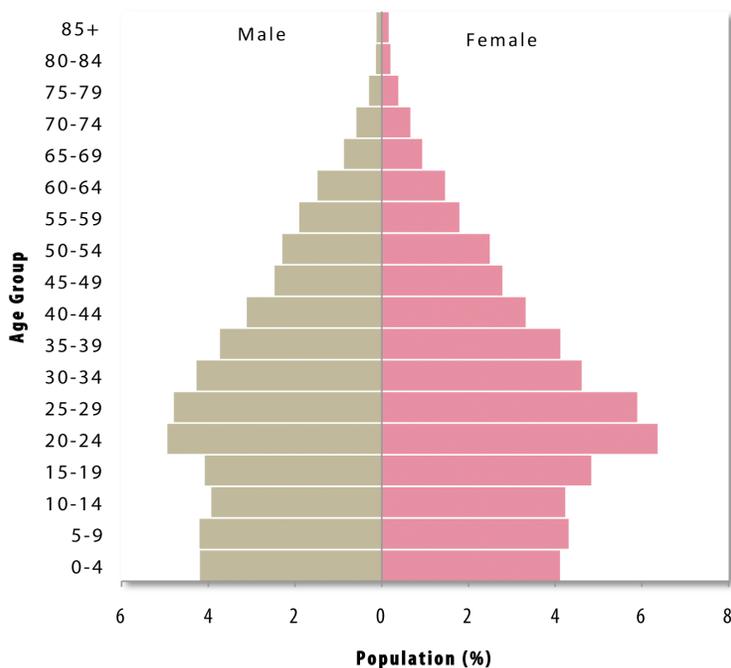
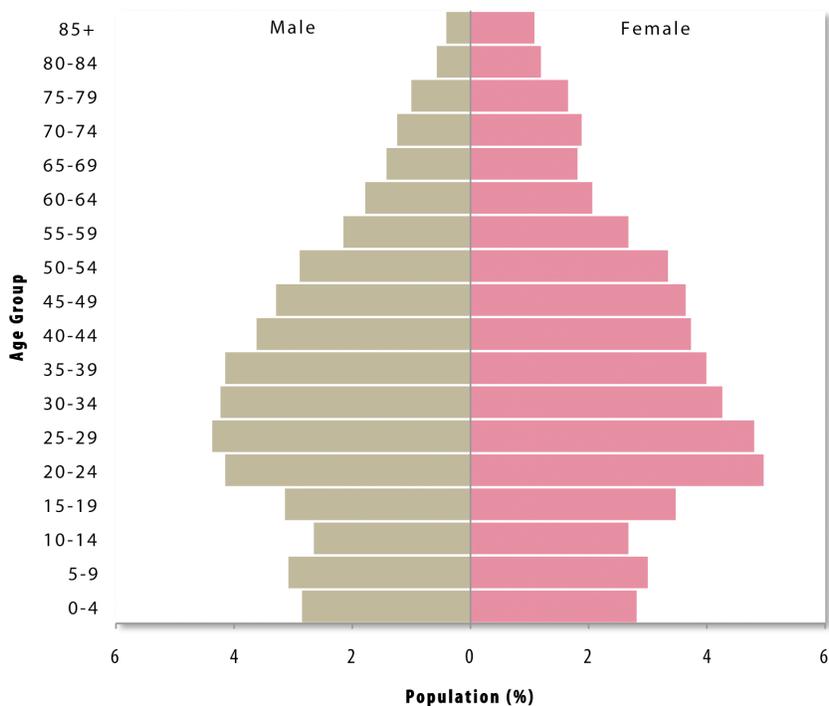


Figure 4. DC 2000





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